



Room 3416, Federal Building
700 West Capitol Avenue
Little Rock, AR 72201

FACT SHEET

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM

WRP is a voluntary program to restore and protect wetlands on private property. WRP offers landowners financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal agricultural land.

How Does WRP Benefit You?

- Receive financial compensation;
- Enhance wetland values that benefit you and society;
- Reduce problems associated with farming potentially difficult areas;
- Practice conservation stewardship; and
- Provide recreational opportunities.

Congress authorized WRP under the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended by the 1990 and 1996 Farm Bills. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service administers the program in consultation with the Farm Service Agency and other Federal agencies. Funding for WRP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Sign-up

States were authorized to begin a continuous sign-up as of October 1, 1996. Check with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office for the sign-up schedule in your State.

- Provide fish and wildlife habitat;
- Improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals;
- Reduce flooding;
- Recharge groundwater;
- Protect biological diversity; and
- Furnish educational, scientific, recreational and esthetic benefits.

How the Program Works

Landowners who choose to participate in WRP may sell a

conservation easement or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement with USDA to restore and protect wetlands. The landowner voluntarily limits future use of the land, yet retains private ownership. The landowner and NRCS develop a plan for the restoration and maintenance of the wetland. The program offers landowners three options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements of a minimum 10-year duration.

Permanent Easement: conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payment will be the lesser of: the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap or an amount offered by the landowner. In addition to paying for the easement, USDA pays 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland.

30-Year Easement: a conservation easement lasting 30 years. Easement payments are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays 75 percent of restoration costs.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement: an agreement (*generally for a minimum of 10 years in duration*) to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity. This does not place an easement on the property. The landowner provides the restoration site without reimbursement.

Other agencies and private conservation organizations may provide additional assistance for easement payment and wetland restoration costs as a way to reduce the landowner's share of the costs. Such special partnership efforts are encouraged.

Landowner Eligibility

The landowner must have owned the land for at least one year prior to enrolling the land in the program unless the land was inherited or the landowner can prove the land was not obtained for the purpose of enrolling it in the program.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Land Eligibility

To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits, including:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions
- Farmed wetlands
- Prior converted cropland
- Farmed wetland pasture
- Farmland that has become a wetland as a result of flooding
- Rangeland, pasture, or production forestland where the hydrology has been significantly degraded and can be restored
- Riparian areas which link protected wetlands
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values
- Previously restored wetlands

Ineligible Land

Ineligible land includes wetlands converted after December 23, 1985; lands with timber stands established under a

CRP contract; Federal lands; and lands where conditions make restoration impossible.

Uses of WRP Land

A landowner continues to control access to the land—and may lease the land—for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities.

At any time, a landowner may request that additional activities be evaluated to determine if they are compatible uses for the site.

This request may include such items as permission to cut hay, graze livestock or harvest wood products.

Compatible uses are allowed if they are fully consistent with the protection and enhancement of the wetland.

For More Information

Additional information on WRP is available from USDA Service Centers, State Cooperative Extension offices, and local conservation districts.